



HERU

HERITAGE URBANISM URBANIZAM NASLIJEĐA

Urban and Spatial Models for Urbanistički i prostorni modeli
Revival and Enhancement za oživljavanje i unaprjeđenje
of Cultural Heritage kulturnoga naslijeđa

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This book is published as part of the research project *Heritage Urbanism – Urban and Spatial Models for Revival and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage* (HERU), carried out by the principal investigator Prof. Mladen Obad Šćitaroci, Ph.D, F.C.A., at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. The project is funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ) under the number 2032.

All papers by the members of *Heritage Urbanism* (HERU) are part of their research on the project.

The publication was accepted by the Publishing Council of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, at the session held on 2 October, 2015.

CIP record is available in computer catalogue of Croatian National and University Library in Zagreb under the number 000915230.

ISBN 978-953-8042-10-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-953-8042-11-9 (e-book)

Knjiga je objavljena u sklopu istraživačkog projekta *Urbanizam naslijeđa – Urbanistički i prostorni modeli za oživljavanje i unaprjeđenje kulturnoga naslijeđa* (HERU), glavnoga istraživača akademika Mladena Obada Šćitarocija, koji se provodi na Arhitektonskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Projekt pod brojem 2032 financira Hrvatska zaklada za znanost (HRZZ).

Sva priopćenja članova *Urbanizma naslijeđa* (HERU) dio su njihova istraživačkoga rada na projektu.

Knjigu je za objavu prihvatilo Povjerenstvo za nakladničku djelatnost Arhitektonskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu na sjednici 2. listopada 2015. godine.

CIP zapis je dostupan u računalnome katalogu Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu pod brojem 000915230.

ISBN 978-953-8042-10-2 (meki uvez)

ISBN 978-953-8042-11-9 (e-knjiga)

PUBLISHER | NAKLADNIK

University of Zagreb, Faculty of
Architecture
| Sveučilište u Zagrebu,
Arhitektonski fakultet
HR-10000 Zagreb, Kačićeva 26
www.arhitekt.hr

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DESIGN | OBLIKOVANJE

Boris Dundović

LAYOUT | GRAFIČKA PRIPREMA

Denona, Zagreb
Boris Dundović

PRINT | TISAK

Denona, Zagreb
www.denona.hr

Zagreb,
October 2015 | listopad 2015.

**INTERNATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE**

**CULTURAL HERITAGE
– POSSIBILITIES FOR SPATIAL
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Zagreb, Croatia
22-23 October, 2015

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INTERVENTION IN PUBLIC SPACES AS A STRATEGY FOR SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT THE MADRID EXPERIENCE IN SPANISH CONTEXT

ZAHVATI U JAVNIM PROSTORIMA KAO OSNOVA STRATEGIJE ZA PROSTORNI RAZVOJ ISKUSTVA IZ MADRIDA U ŠPANJOLSKOM KONTEKSTU

KEY WORDS
public spaces
public space interventions
improvement of public spaces
strategic interventions in public spaces
Madrid

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
javni prostori
zahvati u javnim prostorima
unaprjeđenje javnih prostora
strateški zahvati u javnom prostoru
Madrid

Since the 1980s, public policies of support and investment in public spaces, as well as strategic interventions with all sort of scale raised Spain into a prominent place concerning the specialized debate between improvement of public spaces and urban development, spreading an image of several Spanish cities connected with its public spaces and propagating the idea of a *Spanish livability*, with intensive use of public space, dynamic city centers, and a wide range of touristic attractions and outdoor activities. Taking Madrid as a case study, the paper presents how this system of public spaces affects local spatial development and social dynamics, and how these areas perform a system that support cultural facilities, enhance the historical heritage, organize the mobility and encourage the development of economic activities in a strategy of spatial organization that improves the city for both tourists and inhabitants.

Od 1980-ih godina javne politike potpore i ulaganja u javne prostore, kao i strateški zahvati na svim razinama čiji su rezultati u pojedinim primjerima i međunarodno zapaženi, podižu Španjolsku na istaknuto mjesto u smislu specijalizirane rasprave oko razlike između unaprjeđenja javnog prostora i urbanog razvoja. Brojni zahvati ostvareni u posljednjih nekoliko desetljeća promijenili su sliku nekoliko španjolskih gradova, propagirajući ideju španjolskog načina života u dinamičnim gradskim središtima s intenzivnim korištenjem javnih prostora te širokim spektrom turističkih atrakcija i aktivnosti na otvorenom. Uzimajući Madrid kao studiju slučaja, ovaj rad prikazuje navedene sustave javnih prostora, istražujući nove društvene dinamike i učinke na prostorni razvoj koji proizlaze iz provedbe navedenih zahvata.

INTRODUCTION

The set of strategic interventions in public spaces undertaken in Spain from the 1980s consolidated a model widespread in professional circles and debated by the academic community, making it an essential reference for rehabilitation studies on central areas. In the opposite direction of the strategy adopted by most of the developed countries, which increased the participation of private sector in urban development projects, the responsible for major urban development projects in Spain, since the end of the 1970s, was the Government.¹

This period, which coincides with a new institutional order after the fall of Franco's regime (1976), has given great political and economic autonomy to the Spanish cities. With the return of democracy, the city became focus of intense debate and the public space issue achieved highlights, as one of the most notorious subject in the architecture debate.²

The example of Barcelona was probably the most paradigmatic of this time. Facing strong social demands and severe restrictions on public resources, it adopted a strategy of small-scale interventions in public spaces and neighborhood facilities with strong social participation, involving residents, neighborhood associations, professional organizations, artists and intellectuals. The great popular participation consolidated what became known as an "urban citizen", based on the establishment of social commitments between local government and community and created a strong sense of identity among the citizens and the city, which was very important for the urban policies accomplished in next decades. The interventions had a leverage effect, stimulating the regeneration of the adjacent urban fabric and laying the ground for larger interventions that occurred following, when the improvement of economic conditions at the end of the 80s and the choice for hosting the 1992 Olympic Games, opened up the possibility to conduct major projects.

In the 1980s, around 300 different scale interventions, half of them in open public spaces, were undertaken in Barcelona, mostly realised in few years. According to Borja (2003), this action was a public policy that made up an overall strategy of urban development based in 1) social strategy, by sparking light in several areas of the city, giving a positive response to social demands; 2) strategy of multi-functionality of projects, answering with a single action several problems; 3) strategy of spread the impact of urban interventions, reverberating the positive effects on different scales; 4) strategy of monumentality or quality of design, providing cultural and symbolic attributes that offer visibility and social recognition and 5) strategy of marketing, aiming attract professionals and investors, released by all medias on international stage.

The 1990s represents a change of scale and scope on this intervention model. The recovered of public finances and the possibility to have external resources due hosting world-events and cultural facilities of global scale, increased the expected results. The new goal was to create visibility and spread the image of these cities on international stage attracting investments and tourists.

Besides the paradigmatic interventions for the Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992), other important initiatives took place in Spain in the following years, taking advantage of events on international scale to transform obsolete land and create new areas of development: the Seville International Fair (1992), the City of Arts and Science, in Valencia (1998), and the Guggenheim Museum, in Bilbao (1997).

This strategy of urban development through intervention in public spaces provided by events on international scale has been thoroughly discussed in academic stage and influenced several projects around the world.³ Those experiences, however, were not restricted to these examples and could be found in several Spanish cities, where interventions in public space contributed to enhance cultural heritage, attracted new investments, commercial activities and a growing number of tourists.

Despite very few have been written about rehabilitation of public spaces in Madrid, in the last years, important accomplishments join official statistics to raise the city to an important place regarding the debate connecting public space, cultural policies and urban regeneration.



Fig 1 CaixaForum, (source: Gueraldi, 2015)



Fig 2 Medialab, (source: www.medialab-prado.es [25/04/2015])

1 Compans, 2003

2 Bohigas, 2003

3 Montaner, 2002



Fig 3 Paseo del Arte plan, (source: Sun, 2015)

PASEO DEL ARTE, MADRID

Paseo del Arte (Fig. 3) is the administrative denomination of the axis that goes from Plaza Colon to Plaza Embajadores through the most traditional boulevards of the city: Paseo de Recoletos, Paseo del Prado, Ronda de Atocha and Ronda de Valencia. This path was created in the eighteenth century as a privileged space for leisure and entertainment and today still keeps this function. Known as “the golden triangle of art”, it’s characterized by the exceptional offer of high standard culture facilities and by the presence of important historical heritage as Museo del Prado, Museo Reina Sofia and Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.

Recent governmental initiatives (2003) extended the limits of this axis, which previously ended in Atocha, to southwest, aiming diversify the offer of cultural attractions, improve the architectural quality of public scene and, mostly, spread the dynamic effect of cultural offer to southwest neighborhoods with lower income. In this context, three new facilities were incorporated along the Rondas de Atocha and Valencia: the cultural center La Casa Encendida and the theaters Circo Price and Valle-Inclán.

The architectural creation was an efficiently instrument used in the process of renovation and implementation of new facilities along this axis, which had in the Government and Cultural Foundations its main promoters. In the last years, public investments were responsible for the expansion of Reina Sofia Museum (2005); for the rehabilitation of Palacio de las Cibeles (2004); and for the implementation of Medialab Prado (2013); Circo Price (2007) and Valle Inclán (2005) theaters. In the same perspective, private foundations launched the rehabilitation of ancient buildings to host the cultural centers CaixaForum (2008) and Casa Encendida (2002).

The choice of local and international architects for the most important buildings along this axis, as Moneo, Herzog & De Meuron, Nouvel, BOPBAA Team, Bayón, Paredes y Pedrosa, Linazasoro and Arquimática, has fundamental importance not only for the harmonic incorporation of a contemporary architecture in the classic structure of the path, but also to print a new identity to this sequence of boulevards, as the same time contemporary and respectful with the past.⁴

Most of these interventions transcends the scale of the building and reach an active role in the transformation of the territory, by improving the accesses and creating new open spaces that connect the facilities with the boulevard. This initiative widens the offer of touristic attractions and imputes new dynamics that contribute to the intensive use of public space. As an example, CaixaForum (Fig. 1) has its image intrinsically related to the vertical garden created by Patrick Blanc in the blind façade of the adjacent hotel, as well as Medialab (Fig. 2) cannot be seen apart from Plaza de las Letras, kind of an amphitheater for its imposing digital façade.

In this context, *Paseo del Arte* is a spine that spatially structures this exceptional offer of culture, performing a system of public spaces that connects several cultural facilities through a sequence of wide, bosky and benched boulevards, with both sides covered by services that support the cultural and touristic activities: transport facilities, hotels, restaurants, bars and cafes. The small plazas adjacent to the central path also have an important role in this system, providing areas for rest and leisure. The implementation of a renewal project for this path has been discussed since 2006 and was carried out under the direction of Álvaro Siza which lowered the car traffic lanes, widened the sidewalks and improved the green and shaded areas to pedestrians.

The axis represented by *Paseo del Arte* is an important infrastructure for the cultural offer and can’t be seen only through a touristic perspective. Official statistics shows the important relationship between development and cultural facilities in Madrid. In 2013, museums and cultural centers along the *Paseo del Arte* received more than 10,5 million of visitors⁵. The importance of culture to residents is also notable, according to the statistics, in 2010-2011, 40,1% of the inhabitants with more than 15 years visited museums; 28,2% visited art exhibitions and 29,8% visited scenic arts exhibition⁶ – all rates superior to the Spain average in the correspondent subject. The time spend with leisure and cultural activities is an important indicator to quality of life, once it demon-



Fig 4 Madrid-Río Park, (source: Burgos; Garrido; Porras-Isla, 2014: 146)

⁴ Lacasa, 2010

⁵ <http://www.madrid.es/UnidadesDescentralizadas/UDCEstadistica/Nuevaweb/Cultura,%20Ocio%20y%20Deporte/Cultura/Museos%20y%20monumentos/B1300114.xls> [27/04/2015]

⁶ <http://www.madrid.org/iestadis/fijas/estructu/sociales/estructuhabitosculturales.htm> [27/04/2015]



strates the local investment in culture and also suggests the existence of free time in the citizens daily routine to spend on leisure, indicating a balanced lifestyle, composed not only for obligations relating to work and family.

MADRID-RIO PARK

Madrid-Río Park (2011) (Fig. 4-5) is the most ambitious urban project launched by the Spanish Government in the last years. The burying of 6 kilometers of the M-30 highway in the central area of Madrid created the longest urban tunnel in the world, allowing the implementation of 110 hectares of linear park that cross the city from north to south, with 30.000 new trees, more than 30 kilometers of bike lines and new sports, cultural and leisure facilities.

Idealized by the studios Garrido and Burgos, Porras, Rubio and Álvarez-Sala, in collaboration with the Dutch team West 8, this huge urban structure provided leisure infrastructure and make possible the connection between districts with different levels of income, historically segregated by the river and the highway. The burial of the M-30 lanes and the creation of a park with 33 new pedestrian connections overcome the historical barrier, link the edges of the city along the river and connect the park with the adjacent city.

Except by the footbridge designed by Dominique Perrault, the park doesn't have impressive landmarks or monuments signed by prominent architects. Its main characteristic is the subtle and respectful insertion in the city fabric. The landscaping proposal and the materials used make symbolic references to the course of Manzanares, from its source in Sierra de Guadarrama through its flows into Jarama River. The infrastructure of leisure and the connection with the formerly neglected areas at the right banks of Manzanares, were provided by a variety of green spaces, playgrounds, ball fields, bike paths and modest bridges. The cultural dimension of the project is represented by the rehabilitation of the ancient *Matadero* to host a new cultural center.

The main criticism about the project came from the local press that reports lack of popular participation in the process and the high costs involved – 5 billion dollars, all but 500 million spent to bury the highway – as one of the main causes of Madrid's financial crisis. International publications, however, mostly recognize the achievements of the initiative. According to Kimmelman (2011), Madrid-Río arises from a political culture that presumes public service is an end in itself and needed no commercial justification, though is clearly a boon to business and development. For the New York Times critic, the audacity and scale of this project follow the urban renewal success of Barcelona, Spain's civic trendsetter, once the park belongs to a bigger transformation plan that includes a system of green areas and structural improvements in public transport.

CONCLUSION

The Madrid's cases presented here are inserted in a context of continuity of a legacy that begun in the 1970s and has the public space as protagonist and the Government as the main promoter. Since then, interventions in public spaces have been frequently used as a strategy to promote spatial, economic and cultural development of several Spanish cities. Despite the results achieved have been quite heterogeneous, some experiments showed important results, bringing new dynamics to obsolete areas and reaching intensive use of public space.

The strategic role and expressive number of interventions accomplished in recent decades contribute to offer great visibility to Spanish public spaces and were responsible to set a strong sense of identity between the cities and these areas, in a process with very unique features in which several cities have their image strongly associated with their public spaces.

We can learn from these case studies how public spaces systems can be important tools in order to promote the spatial development of cities and, above all, how the

model of strategic organization of these axis can contribute to the development of specific topics such as culture and leisure.

It is also important to emphasize the fundamental role of the Government in this process. By managing the interventions, it ensures the actions keep consistency with urban planning's public policies and set up the proper integration between social, cultural and mobility fields, among others. The new dynamics conquered by these areas after the interventions stem from the combination between public spaces created by the Government, further private investments that took advantage of them and the appropriation of space by users.

At the present moment, one of the main challenges is thinking of alternatives to this model, given the lack of public resources to finance new projects. The main issues point to the risk of compromise the important role played by public spaces in the Spanish public policies due to the inexistence of financing sources. Private financing of urban development, in this context, should be carefully analyzed, once initiatives resulting from this practice differ greatly from the local tradition. Along the process of finding alternative sources of financing is necessary to implement measures that ensure the broad and unrestricted use of public spaces, since they are determining elements of the Spanish citizen's liveability.

Fig 5 Madrid-Río Plan, (source: Burgos; Garrido; Porras-Isla, 2014: 19)

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